

**From the
show floor**



**Digital cameras
Home entertainment**



Plus
- Top five of show

- Personal computing
- Portable audio

HUB

LIVING

Volume 18 Number 2

Test Lab: 17-inch LCD monitors head-to-head

Program Tech etiquette
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2005 Consumer Electronics Show

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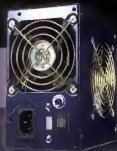
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It's not surprising that Alienware (www.alienware.com), a company known for its high-performance gaming PCs and laptops, has made PC gaming an important feature of its latest Media Center, the DHS 2. The incorporated iDiscover "drop in play" technology (an Alienware media sense) allows users to play PC games on the television without having to go through an installation process. In addition, users can listen to music from CDs or files streamed through either the Internet or an FM tuner, watch repeated video clips or DVDs, and even communicate using MSN instant messaging — all from a single box in the living room controlled by keyboard, mouse, and remote control. Other goodies include Dolby Digital 5.1 and analog 7.1 surround sound support, WinWise, two USB 2.0 ports, and multiple TV tuners — meaning more than one channel can be watched or recorded simultaneously. Expect to pay just over \$2000 for the DHS 2 (from US\$1620).



Alienware DHS 2 Media Center



The new Wi-Fi MP3 player from Giant International automatically scans for Wi-Fi hotspots and allows users to download MP3s (as well as audio books and audiobooks) directly into the device from online MP3 downloading services without having to go through a PC first. The device can also download tunes from a user's PC by way of the household wireless network. The player has a built-in FM radio transmitter, which allows for listening to MP3s through a home stereo system, as well as recording

songs or talk shows direct from the radio.

There's an impressive 20GB storage capacity (that translates into between 5,000 and 7,000 songs), and two headphone jacks so that two people can listen at the same time.

The player will cost approximately \$425 (from US\$449.99). For more details visit www.toshiba.com.

For Wi-Fi MP3



Konica Minolta's Magcolorline of colour laser printers (printer sans camera) is challenging the notion that lasers are traditionally used to print high-quality text pages as opposed to images. The company has even gone as far as to build an award machine, the

Magcolor 2430 DL, as "print friendly." The 2430 DL is the first colour laser printer with PostScript 3.0 support, meaning pictures can be printed directly from any PostScript-compatible camera without needing a computer. The printer's base memory is 32MB but can be upgraded to a maximum of 544MB. The 2430 DL is capable of handling up to 2400 dpi (dots per inch) resolution, and will cost approximately \$620 (from US\$489).

Magcolor 2430 DL, laserjet photo printer

Casio's AP-800 digital piano is the newest addition to the company's Casio line. With a wood cabinet and 88 weighted keys, the AP-800 looks and feels like an acoustic piano but has all the advantages of an electric keyboard including MIDI, microphone and head phone jacks and, for the first time, USB connectivity. Capable of 32-note polyphony, the piano comes with 256 tones, 120 pre-programmed rhythms and 80 songs — complete with lyrics that scroll across the built-in LCD display. Additional songs and lyric data can be downloaded from www.casiorange.com and transferred via USB in conjunction with the integrated Smart Media Slot. The AP-800's keys are touch-sensitive using a "dual element" system, where two different stereo gated piano samples are used for each note — one for the hard hit sound, and one for the light touch sound. The digital piano will cost about \$3620 (from \$6129.99).



Casio AP-800



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HUB @ CES 2005: Best of show

Sean Carruthers' picks

Reborn again v2.0

The hottest toy from Christmas grows up, with twice the length, twice the number of joints (including full-actuator fingers), motion sensors and a jump-up single remote control for even better motion control.



Olympus mureba 500 with Cheap Trick back-catalogue

Who needs the LG iPod when there's the Cheap Trick in robot? With a 20GB hard drive, touch-sensitive screen and 3.3 megapixel digital camera onboard, the mureba 500 is already cool. Unfortunately, the Cheap Trick version was only available to two lucky winners who saw Cheap Trick play at the Olympus booth... auto

TMG networked oven

This Internet-connected two-compartment oven keeps your meal cool until you send it the signal over the Internet or via cell phone when you're about to come home, and then it starts cooking your dinner. It'll be available in April for US\$2500 (about \$9,000), but installation and food are extra.

Logitech Harmony 860 remote

Download all your remote control codes from the Internet and stock 'em in the Harmony 860, which now features a large colour LCD screen capable of displaying channel logos, screen savers and more. It has its own recharge station now and the volume and channel controls are now conveniently placed at thumb level in a beautiful redesign.

USB

The ability to put your applications on a USB key is already a great idea, allowing you to do your work on any computer you run across. Giving one touch-of-glue kids is an even better idea, so they won't mess up your computer with all of their own custom settings!

Andrew Moore-Crispin's picks

Philips Wireless Music Center - RMCS700

The RMCS700 stores up to 4000 worth of digital music files in one central location and plays or transmits them wirelessly to up to five desktop base stations around the house. A neat "Yellow me" function allows users to press a button (conveniently called "Yellow me") to transmit a song mid-play to their next stop in the house.

Philips Personal Sound System - PSS110

Another product that caught my eye at the Philips booth: the PSS110 is a boom box styled MP3 playing travel clock. It makes for one bulky player as portables go, but the surprising amount of sound it kicks out from the onboard speakers makes it worth the extra suitcase space.

Spheres R32 game chair

The R32 is a well-timed 5.1 sound system "integrally installed into the [game] chair." A comfy chair at that. While it may have been symptoms of Halo 2 withdrawal, I spent an inordinate (not to mention unfair) amount of time in the R32. A host of technologies are crammed into the chair to ensure gamers feel every shot fired or explosion evaded, not least of which is the "Burstcocker tactile transducer" that physically shakes the chair when offered deep bass. I guess the title "Burstcocker Bowl Liquefier" while it may be more factual doesn't have quite the same marketing caché. Also.

LG MW-75PFR 75-inch plasma

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Enhanced PS/2 Keyboard
PS/2 Wheel Mouse
16" P4-ATX USB2.0 5-Port Case
1010MB Ethernet C/S
140W Speaker
17" DAYTEK GT17P Flat Monitor

Base-ATX/ATX Motherboard (695W), 300MHz FSB, AGP 8x
256MB PC3200 DDR RAM
80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
800MHz video w/256MB VRAM
Open AGP 8x Slot
Sony CRX300 50x35x50 CD-RW
5.1 Channel 5.1 Sound Card D/S
Enhanced PS/2 Keyboard
Logitech Optical Wheel mouse
16" P4-ATX USB2.0 5-Port Case
1010MB Ethernet C/S
800W Speakers w/ Subwoofer
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5.1 Channel 5.1 Sound Card D/S
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Base-ATX/ATX Motherboard (695W), 300MHz FSB, AGP 8x
256MB PC3200 DDR RAM
80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
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Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
Microsoft Optical Wheel Mouse
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SOLERA-5130

SOLERA-5130

SOLERA-7130

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HUB @ CES – Home Entertainment

Plasma Screens

Apparently, bigger is better in plasma screens. Samsung showed off its huge display at its press conference on the show floor. The 922-inch plasma screen was by far the biggest I've ever seen, which makes sense given that Samsung says it's the biggest in the world.

Last year, LG suffered plasma envy when its still-huge screen didn't quite measure up to Samsung's. If nothing else, a lesson was learned: before publicly comparing units, be sure to have a private "I'll show you mine if you show me yours" meeting. There's nothing worse than showing off your unit only to find it comes up two inches too short.

This year, LG's flagship plasma display was a more manageable but still living-room-dwarfing 71 inches. LG has committed to having the MW 71 P110 available within the first half of 2006. At 1,920x1,080 (Full HD) resolution, the only thing holding me back from making a pre-order is the \$4,800,000 (\$51,200) sticker price.

LED Displays

The biggest news surrounding LCD televisions is in the falling component cost that comes with wider adoption and an accompanying drop in cost per diagonal inch of screen space at retail. Also, while displays continue to grow, manufacturers continue to improve the overall look by focusing

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atmosphere behind the screen, or at least behind the screen's LCD monitors and smaller televisions are typically lit without cold-cathode fluorescent tubes. This allows for a uniform diffused backlight. As screens grew however, flat lights aren't going to cut it. Major manufacturers showed off the guts of their screens, revealing new methods for lighting including a Samsung display using a diffused LED lighting system that requires less energy and casts a more even light behind the LCD screen. Meanwhile, Philips unveiled its new backlight technology for LCD displays that gathers light hitting the front of the screen across vertical thirds of the screen and adjusts the lighting individually — either gradually or almost instantaneously — to give a more even picture.

Philips also showed off a cool (a lot!) full-length mirror with an LED television screen concealed in the bottom quarter. This mirror is designed primarily for high-end hotel applications but is intended to light and complement the Philips room suit.

DLP
Digital Light Processing (DLP) was another major contender on the show floor. The Texas Instruments technology that powers millions of independent and monochrome video monitors that reflect light to a screen and share off a reconstruction onto and projector lens. Benefits of the technology include a light, slim and responsive picture, the potential for huge images and TV sets at a low price point relative to large plasma and LCD screens. All major manufacturers showed a DLP set aside projectors from BenQ, Samsung, Philips and LG, among others. The only holdouts were Sony, the company decries DLP as an inferior technology and sticks with its own LCD projection technology in rear-projection TV sets (enter the Japanese world's best).

Article DLP is not a new technology, some recognition on the shop floor

were of delicate vintage. Perhaps most notable were two literally palm sized DLP projectors shown off at the Texas Instruments and Infocus booths. Mitsubishi's tiny projector is expected to retail in the region of US\$400 (€175) when it first goes on shelves, hopefully before the end of 2005. While Canadian availability has yet to be revealed, we should expect these projectors about the same time they arrive in the US, plus say using an LED light source to keep power consumption and heat down, the picture from a mini projector is noticeably warmer than that of other projectors and is expected to last about a 2-year span. @!@@@ (p)over With its long stature and resulting portability however, the trade off may seem well worth it. But I want to see it before I believe it!

Table 1

Microsoft was, as ever, putting the push on Windows XP Media Center PC. Extra news in its 2005 information released late last year. Multi-tuner support is among the most needed of the updates, allowing users to watch one program while recording another. Also, users can now watch over the air HD programming.

The real news, however, was the proliferation of Media Center Extender devices on the floor. Microsoft and those manufacturing PCs that utilize the software have their sights set on getting the PC into the living room. Media Center Extenders could prove to be their Trojan horse. Rather than asking users to grace the home theater setup with a bulky Media Center PC, content is transferred to and from the home PC hidden elsewhere (run using Windows Media Center). Similarly, XP among others has shunned down and cleaned up the look of old and outmoded a computer that users won't be inclined to dedicate entertainment will shed space to

Weg: Anzahl von Feldern: 1000000

[illegible]

Building the Ultimate Gaming PC: Part Four

Okay, that's it. In this installment, I finish building the Ultimate Gaming PC, plug it in and...poof!—prepare to turn it on!

Step Ten: Installing the Front-Mounted USB 2.0 Ports

The Mutant Mode case comes with a front-mounted module consisting of two USB 2.0 ports. They are useful for plugging in joysticks, digital cameras, or anything else that you want to connect without messing around with the back of the case.

Unfortunately, the mount on the ABT motherboard had nine pins, whereas each of the USB ports had a four-wire lead; actually one three-wire and one one-wire lead apiece. It wasn't until I received feedback from Ben Redburn at Startech, maker of Mutant Mode (www.startech.com) that I knew what to do: plug in one USB port on pins 1, 2, 5, and 7, and plug the second into 2, 4, 6, and 8. Wizard, but it worked.

Step Eleven: Adding the Video Card

With the USB ports finally dealt with, it was time to add the ABT 8800 Pro (a.k.a. ATI Radeon 8800 Pro) video card: the monster equipped with 475MHz clock speeds and 256MB GDDR3 on-board memory.

As it turned out, only one slot on the AAB mobo would accommodate this card: namely the PCI Express x16 slot fitted with a tiny white plastic lock-down clamp at one end. To insert the video card, I had to depress the clamp so that the card's hook-shaped end would fit into the slot. From there, I just pressed down gently, and the ABT 8800 Pro was seated.

Step Twelve: Adding the Hard Drives (And Old CD-ROM)

It was now time to install the two Western Digital 10,000 rpm 74GB hard drives (for fast file-swapping during game play), and the two Maxtor 2200 rpm 300GB drives (for data storage). I also chose to add an old Samsung SC-548C CD-ROM that I had on hand. (Yeah, I do have the original Pioneer PL-7060 to re-encode CDs and DVDs, but I wanted to have a CD-ROM around for easy software installation.) (Since the AAB mobo also came with a floppy disk, RadioShack supplied an external "Icar: PC-BUS/USB floppy disk. I didn't want to add a 1990s vintage internal floppy to a 21st Century gaming machine!)

The Big Screw-Up!

Wow! It happened: the Big Screw-Up! (It's a new word for every PC builder.) In this case, I couldn't install the drives or the CD-ROM into the case's two vertical plastic mounting panels without removing both side panels,



including the one with the mobo mounted on it. What?!

Frantically, I scanned through the case instructions. At first glance, I saw the apparent source of my problem: I should have installed the standoff pins for the hard drives before I mounted the mobo, it said. But wait: even with the stand-offs preinstalled, I still couldn't have screwed the hard drives and CD-ROM in place. What to do?

The Solution

A techie came to my rescue by suggesting removing the two vertical mounting plates. And then building the "tower" of hard drives and CD-ROM outside the case. (Well, it was easy; the whole rig was to be gently eased into the case and reattached.)

Fortunately, this was the answer! The only downside was that there was n't enough room on the vertical panels for four hard drives; the case was only designed to hold two HDDs, a 3.5-inch floppy, and three 5.25-inch CD-ROMs. As a result, I installed the two Western Digital Raptors and one of the Maxtors.

Step Thirteen: Plugging in the Drives and Power

With the drives in place, all that remained was to plug in the data cables and the power cords. The Samsung CD-ROM required an IDE ribbon cable; the Western Digital and Maxtor hard drives used new serial ATA cables. All of these came with the AAB mobo. (Thankfully, as well, I used one of the Mutant Mode lighted Serial ATA cables to daisy-chain up the monitor. Finally, I added some of the Mutant Mode lighting effects: two Bubble Light tubes (one red and one blue), and two Blue Hetero light tubes, all of which were mounted up front inside the clear plastic case. (These are controlled using buttons mounted in the PC's back slots; to conserve slots, I was able to plug a Bubble tube into each of the Maxtor power connectors. This meant that I only needed to use two slots to support four lighting effects.)

Step Fourteen: The Big Moment!

Now that everything was in place, it was time to close up "Mutant" (my wife's name for the Ultimate Gaming PC), plug in the components, and turn it on. Finally, I would know whether months of planning, PC assembly, and mistakes fixing would pay off!

After plugging in the essentials—the Samsung 15-inch LCD monitor, Logitech keyboard and mouse, plus turning on the power bar's power button—I nervously approached the front-mounted Power On button. Would Mutant spring into life? Flashing life when I pressed the button? Would the ABT logo blossom on my monitor screen as expected? Or would there be a Star Trek-style explosion of sparks instead, where did the Federation buy their hardware from anyway? (You're right: would nothing happen at all?) Would the Ultimate Gaming PC turn out to be the Ultimate Howler Roaring? With trembling hand and bated breath, I pressed the Power On button.

Coming Up: All Questions Are Answered

In the final installment of "Building the Ultimate Gaming PC," we find out what happened after I pushed the Power On button. We'll also learn if Mutant loaded its Windows XP Professional operating system cheerfully and quickly, how the Aice: Gaming VS11.5 5.1 surround sound speaker system performed, and most importantly, how the Ultimate Gaming PC fared when loaded with the Sims 2 and other games. Stay tuned!

By James Carrivick

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common to every monitor in this test, it doesn't allow users to make adjustments beyond brightness and contrast, potentially frustrating more meticulous and exacting users.

It's a shame, given that the F1703 is a quick-response time in the fastest of the monitors tested. For the less hardware-gamers among us, the almost nonexistent ghosting won't prove an issue.

Unfortunately, the monitor does offer users any way to make physical adjustments beyond tilting the display, so height adjustment is absent. With no light bars at the side of the panel, a relatively thin bezel and sleeker appeal combined with a wide viewing angle, the F1703 is a good flat-panel choice for the average user. More exacting users would prefer a little more control over display adjustments and better black reproduction at the low end of the scale.

attached to the actual area or placed independently within the proprietary speaker web's atop the F1703 stands in the middle ground, satisfying both the high and low ends of the colour and grey scale. That said, what sacrifices it makes come on the lower end of said scales.

Getting a truly accurate on-screen black was impossible in our tests, even with the brightness set to zero in one stage of the monitor setup using DisplayMax. Blacks came across as dark grey, resulting in a washed-out feeling with dark images and to a lesser extent, across the board. A relatively poor response time makes this monitor unsuitable for all but the most occasional game players while movie performance was good with generally bright films but lacked contrast in darker ones. As with gaming, super fast action becomes a problem owing to the monitor's sluggish LCD response time. Ideally suited to less taxing general PC use, the F1703 caters to its niche. The more hardware-savvy will want to step up to a faster response time and more accurate colour/grey reproduction at both the high and low ends of the scale.

Pros: Easy physical adjustments, included on-screen system and optional subwoofer.
Cons: True black seems impossible to achieve, slow response.

Pavilion F1703

Manufacturer: HP www.hp.ca

Estimated price: \$850 Horizontal/vertical viewing angle: 140/120
Response time: Not disclosed Brightness: 200 cd/m² Contrast: 300:1
The biggest selling points for HP's Pavilion F1703 LCD flat-panel monitor come in the form of the easy-to-use numerous physical adjustments, two Harman International speakers that plug directly into the monitor and can be

Direction L7A65

Manufacturer: Direction Estimated price: \$450

Horizontal/vertical viewing angle: 140/120
Response time: 16ms Brightness: 200 cd/m² Contrast: 400:1
Canadian company Direction is making a run at the big guys with flat panels in about the same price range that the company says include ports features not available in its competitor's line.



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The L7465 keeps with tradition offering a narrow gain metal gray bezel with bottom-mounted speakers.

As the newbies, the L7465 surprisingly showed some of the best results in our tests, its ability to display true blacks while not losing very dark greys and to simultaneously show bright, clean whites with little loss of contrast at the high end of the scale were unmatched. However, in trying to achieve a true color spectrum on the lighter end, dark greys take on a slight greenish cast.

It seems strange that the L7465 performed admirably on both the high and low ends since its adjustments seem crude in comparison to other LCDs tested. Upon entering the menu systems (using the five side-mounted and clearly visible buttons) and choosing either brightness or contrast, such adjustments up or down is quite noticeable on the screen. Other panels offer fine-tuning of sorts, as differences between 42 and 43 on the bright end scale, for example, aren't visible with the naked eye. By comparison, each single numerical jump is immediately obvious on the L7465. This makes it difficult to get a proper adjustment, as effective brightness and contrast adjustments are all contained within about 30 points on the scale, leaving 90 largely unused.

Free: Wide viewing angle, speakers included, excellent range, DVI and D-SUB connections.
 Cons: Slight light bleed in both modes tested, speakers too tiny, lack of menu adjustment.

SDH-H574P

Manufacturer: Sony www.sony.ca
 Horizontal / vertical viewing angle: 140/130
 Estimated price: \$695.00

Response time: 16ms Brightness: 400
 Contrast: 500:1

Sony's flat panel is the only monitor in our roundup that opts for a clear glass face as opposed to light diffusing matte glass put on the viewing surface of other monitors. Inside the clear glass reflects room light, requiring that some thought be given to its positioning on the desk so as to avoid or minimize such reflections, it also gives the screen a much brighter and arguably better overall picture.

The SDH-H574P features more user image adjustment options than other monitors tested. Most notable is a on-screen control used to select from four settings: high, middle, low and user defined. That said, even adjusting the backlight to the lowest level can't get rid of a slight light bleed on the left and right edges of the screen. While both the high middle and low of the grayscale display very well, neither can I be satisfied at the same time, users must choose whether true whites or accurate blacks will take precedence. Keeping the user control buttons on the underside left edge of the panel while putting the corresponding labels on the face of the monitor was a good choice. Likewise, a removable black panel helps the connections keep things neat and tidy.

Pros: DVI and D-SUB connections, excellent industrial design, adjustable bezel.
 Cons: Slight light bleed on left and right edges, users must choose between accurate blacks and whites.

The panel's black lines, thin bezel and reflective glass screen make it something most would be proud to have on their desk.

Flattom, I. 1989.

© 2004 Blackwell Publishing Ltd, *Journal of Internal Medicine* 255: 111–118

Fulltext available on: 8/20/05. Downloaded from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com>

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The first and most noticeable difference between the two other languages

submitted) is visible on the face of the monitor in the form of a signal.

large widescreen LCD display. Users turning the monitor on will see an

assumed, users find a wider range of useful and varied results from standard TM

material cable to compensate. RCA and S-Video are. The device also has front-

Estimated Readers: This position more important than other positions.

Reprinted by permission from *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35:10, 1996, pp. 1211-1220.

The 1976 outbreak also shows that all persons and animals exposed need not be

specific to the further end. In addition, a statistically positive and robust

[illegible]

are blown out and whites become blinding and lack definition.

As a monitor, users can choose to have their desktop displayed in either

1.1 ratio with the sides of the screen unused for an image that looks about reasonable: 1.5 with HD screen, or it can be divided in 1.6:1.0

screen mode stretches the desktop across the wide screen, resulting in a

skinned back that becomes more noticeable when looking at pictures

As a small LCD television, DVD and console gaming screen, its myriad

input options, excellent service and

Fig. 74. *Curat on-board*. 174

and D-S-B conventions

polling equipment. As a primary care

Case 14084-03 **Notes** (after subject's hearing, the diagnosis

addscreen computing some well quite as frequently

ghosting with fast motion

[illegible]

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HUB @ CES: Cell phones

It's almost getting to the point now where you can't get a cell phone handset that doesn't have something else added to it. Bluetooth is becoming more and more popular, and while camera phones continue to spread like wildfire (or a fungus, depending on how you feel about them), videophones are the new hot thing.

Fashion is also on the agenda with new phones, including a few prototypes from Nokia scheduled to launch later in the year. The sleek 7290 handset looks like a cross between a laptop tab and an MP3 player, with an LCD window next to a spinning wheel. There's no number pad at all on this model; instead, you use the wheel to dial and to select letters for text messaging. It takes a little bit longer, but the phone is much more discrete. That aesthetic also influenced the design of the 7270, though the sleek 7270 flips open to reveal a number pad.

LG introduced new sliding handsets, including the FM 325 (its first Bluetooth handset), the L2110 EDGE phone, and the IM650S 1.3 megapixel camaphone. Most interesting of these new sliding handsets was the F8100, which looks like a regular phone at a glance, but slides open sideways to reveal a QWERTY keyboard for use with the web and messaging applications. All of these handsets were scheduled for launch at the end of January. The company also introduced the new V9000C handset, which includes both a 1.3 megapixel camera and video capabilities.

Autovox's new DPH 180 has a difference: the LCD screen appears on the upper half of the clamshell phone in landscape mode, which the company feels will make it more compatible with photo and video applications, not to mention text messaging. The phone also features a built-in VGA quality camera.

If Internet access, instant messaging, photo and video aren't enough for you when it comes to your cell phone, how about television, too? MobTV offers 22 channels in real time over the data net, work to users of Compaq's Nokia 5680 handset for a USB13 subscription fee (around \$12), in addition to the phone's regular data costs.

If you can wait a bit longer, Texas Instruments announced development of its new "Hollywood"





chip, designed to put an actual TV tuner on a single chip inside a cell phone. By the time the product hits the mainstream, in late 2004 or early 2007, it will support 24-30 frames per second – an improvement over what's currently available today using the standard cellular data networks.

Jabra's BT1900 wireless Bluetooth headset is a bit bulkier than usual, and that's not just because it has Bluetooth onboard – it also has a small LCD window on it. The LCD display shows caller ID, so you won't have to hold out the phone itself in order to see who's calling, but it also gives you access to some of the functions found on the phone, like the ability to change your ringtone, look through your address book, and more. It also uses Digital Signal Processing to cut down on ambient noise. Despite all of this, it still weighs under 30 grams. It will be available for around \$300 (from US\$149).

Headset maker Plantronics took a bit of a different tack with the US305, a Bluetooth headset system that not only connects to your cell phone, but can also be used with your residential telephone, too. It does this through the headset's charging base. Right next to the spot where you plug in the power adapter, there's a telephone jack for your home telephone line. Inside the base is a Bluetooth converter that will communicate with your headset while you're at home, allowing you to answer the home phone with the tap of a button on the headset. There's no call display, unfortunately, so you'll have to look at another phone in the house for that, but once you answer it, you'll be able to roam the house freely.

By Sean Connolly

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3309	3429	3549	3839
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HUB & GES 2005: Portable Audio

Thanks to the immensely popular Apple iPod, which is now a fashionable cultural icon, dozens of companies are trying to cash in on the craze by launching their own digital audio players or recorders. Hundreds of such products made their debut at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. The following is a brief look at what CES had to offer.

<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jmr>

While it's not a familiar name to portable music fans, the SanyoCast Amio 2 is a second-generation product that essentially transfers music to and from a PC - without the need to connect it via a cable.

At a wireless presentation, the Aero 212 links with an existing wireless network and transmits music at roughly 11 megabits per second (Mbps) (800-114) But the Aero is roughly 25 percent slower than last year's version. It is now equipped with a 2GB hard drive instead of a 1GB, and features a USB 2.0 port, which is roughly 10 times faster than the old USB 1.1 port (unless you don't have a wireless network). Other features include a built-in FM receiver [and transmitter, to send the music to a FM radio for wireless listening] and a Serenus Digital T50 1-watt stereo



While there are no plans to bring the product to Canada, the SonyEricc J100 2 can be purchased for roughly US\$299 through SonyEricc's OEM partner. Read more about it at www.sonyericc.ca

You talkin' to me?

When a cell phone does it this round up, you ask? Motorola's EB85 does a lot more than just make phone calls. When the product debuts later this summer (no corner comment as of yet), it will also be able to download and play MP3s and movie clips via a video-on-demand service (weather, sports highlights, music videos, news, etc.). The EB85 is one of Motorola's first to feature the high-speed EV-DO technology for fast and secure transmission to the phone.

While the Bluetooth-enabled phone only has 40MB of internal memory (a low 16 MP3 tunes), it is expandable (up to 256MB) via a third-party card slot. You can also stream still images using the EB85's 3.3-megapixel camera, or record up to 95 seconds of video to email or deliver on the phone.

Look Ma, no hands

While Apple may be garnering all the love for its iPod products, Creative has quietly been pumping out — in its journal — its opinion — superior products that sound better, do more and last longer. Now the company has unveiled its wireless headphones solution for its portable Zen Micro player — so you can rock your portable music player in your lap, pocket or purse. Then there's the wireless headphones for cord-free personal listening. A small plastic casing fits snugly around the small Zen Micro and plugs into its head phone jack.

The Zen Micro is the first prod-

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ect to feature the Auto LibraryLink LL800 chipset, a patented digital abstraction-compression technology for stereo audio transmission. These comfortable headphones also enjoy up to 20 hours of continuous playback from a single AAA battery. The only detachable device is the fact these only work within two feet or so of the Zen Micro.

Creative's Zen Micro Photo also won awards at CES 2005, it's a compact portable player that plays music, digital photos or both together in a slideshow presentation. The 1.5-inch LCD screen boasts an impressive 262,144 colours. The \$88 model can store up to 7500 JPE images or 3,800 songs.

Creative hasn't confirmed a Canadian price or availability of these products as of yet.

XM unplugged

Finally, satellite radio fans were ecstatic at the unveiling of XMGo at CES, the world's first handheld XM Satellite Radio product that can receive 130 channels of CD-quality audio and even store up to five hours of commercial-free programming on its internal hard drive. In the U.S., XM Satellite Radio works from coast to coast, but until the debut of XMGo in January, this technology had been limited to in-car decks or home-based receivers. Other features of the XMGo include a rechargeable battery, remote control, headphones and a FM transmitter to wirelessly send the XM programming to any nearby FM radio. An LCD screen will show information such as stock tickers, sports scores and more. Companies that will make XMGo products include Delphi, Pioneer and the Hyundai that XM Radio (xmradio.com) and its competitor, Sirius Satellite Radio (sirius.com), are coming to Canada in 2005 have not been confirmed by either company at this time, but check with XM for the latest news.

By Marc Sotomayor

Visit www.hubcanada.com for more portable audio info

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HUB @ CES 2005: Computing

While the Consumer Electronics Show is technically about consumer electronics (with that name, go figure), there's always something to talk about when it comes to the world of computing, especially with the decline of the Comdex computer trade show. It's not really a surprise, because the two worlds are slowly but steadily crossing over. As PCs start

to handle more and more of the multimedia functions previously done by home entertainment components (CD audio, DVD movie playback), home entertainment components are starting to integrate more computer technology (digital camera port slots on televisions, hard drives in personal video recorders).



While computer-specific announcements were in the minority during this show, there were still a few things worth noting.

USB: It's not a rock band

One of the more interesting announcements during the show was USB, a new joint venture between SanDisk and H Systems, both big players in the flash memory area. As the capacity of USB memory keys continues to grow, the two companies had a brain storm, why not use those high capacity memory keys not only to store your files, but to run your applications as well?¹ The concept is simple. Each USB-branded memory key will feature

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an application launcher, and U3-certified applications can be downloaded straight to the key. In theory, that could be anything, from a word processor to an MP3 player. Companies who have already provided us with U3 to provide U3-compatible applications are Corel, EQ (AOL), McAfee, Microsoft and Zone Labs (Check Point). When you plug your U3 key into any computer, the application launcher will find up all the applications onboard your key, and when you pull the key out of the computer's USB port, there should be no loss of space used on your platform, thus preserving

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If you're tired of wasting your index cartridges printing out CD labels, have a look at LightScribe's Direct Disc Labeling, a technology developed by Minidisc Pickard, now adopted by other companies like Toshiba. Drives equipped with the technology will be able to burn standard CDs or DVDs, but when you're done burning the data, you just flip the disc over and "label" it (with text and images) on the other side of the disc. As promised, the label side burns in only one colour – laser black – but that's expected to change with future versions of the product. Of course, you'll need special blank discs that have a LightScribe-compatible labelable side; the drive will have a small window on one readable blank.

Force10 introduced a slimline drive for use in notebook computers, and it's expected to ship sometime in the first quarter of 2005. Look for the technology to be bundled in other manufacturers' notebooks soon (Doe can only assume this will include HP too, as the company developed the technology).

THE NEW GREAT THINGS IN THE WORLD

The thought behind Apple's new keyboard layout is that QWERTY was originally designed to slow typists down so they wouldn't jam up the mechanical parts of a typewriter. Now that there's no reason to slow typists down, why not have a keyboard that makes more logical sense? The Apple model groups all of the vowels on one side of the keyboard, and the most common consonants on the other side, allowing for faster performance by dividing the work between both hands. The logic is that if you're typing the pun, is that the other letters are arranged mostly in alphabetical order, which will make it easier for



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HUB @ CES 2005: Networking

Whether it's handhelds, gaming consoles, media players or cameras, many of the newest products can connect to your home network, either by cable or using Wi-Fi, and many of the products shown off at this year's show had networking built in.

D-Link is still going strong with its network-based networking products. Aimed at gamers, the DGL-4300 GameLounge Wireless Router has gigabit networking ports onboard, and features traffic prioritization on the router to make sure that if computer downloads on your home network doesn't slow down your network gaming. There's also a wired version of the router. The company also updated its wireless media sharing device with the MediaLounge DSM 5200H, which adds a DVD player and a 5-in-1 digital camera card reader. The MediaLounge DSM 5200H player has an 80GB hard drive inside, and the ability to play high definition content. The gaming routers are expected in March, and the MediaLounge products won't be available in Canada until at least April.

Monitors giant ViewSonic's Media Gateway is a four-port broadband sharing router that comes with two built-in USB ports for sharing printers, and a 120GB hard drive inside to store your media files (audio, photo and video). The Wireless Media Adapter hooks up to any TV or computer monitor. Once you have the Gateway in place, you can add multiple adapter units around the house, but you'll probably only be able run up to three of them at full tilt at any one time before the wireless bandwidth starts to max out.

The Wireless Media Kit is a package that has one Wireless Media Adapter and one Media Gateway. The WM540 Wireless-8 Media Link is the new Linksys wireless media streaming product, expected by mid-year. It uses an 802.11g wireless signal to transmit premium content (i.e. Hapology, DharmaFlow and more...) to any television in the household, without the need for a Windows Media Center PC and an Internet Explorer 6.0 before, the player also streams audio, video and photos from your PC. Linksys is also part of a new initiative with Hewlett Packard called Secure Easy Setup, which is designed to take some of the headache out of setting up a wireless network. If you have two SES-enabled devices – say a notebook and a router – users simply tap the SES buttons on the router. Then go over to the notebook and tap the same button, and it will set up a secured connection between the two automatically, saving the headache of figuring out all of the wireless networking settings. Archer's Pocket Media Assistant PM430LE is the newest in the company's portable media product line, featuring onboard Wi-Fi and digital video recorder functionality when placed in the multimedia base unit. The player uses Linux as its bedrock, allowing you to custom configure it with Linux applications, and the Wi-Fi component allows you to connect directly to the Internet (the Opera web browser is already included, as is an email client). The player will cost about \$1200 (from US\$900).

LG Electronics' LRM 618 is a hard drive and DVD recorder, but it also adds Microsoft's Windows Media Extender capabilities. You simply hook a wireless networking adapter to the hard drive/DVD recorder via the USB 2.0 ports on the back of the unit, allowing you to pull your multimedia content – including MPEGs, WMV files, JPEGs, MP3s, and WMA files – from other computers connected to your wireless network. The USB ports on the back will also accommodate external hard drives, memory card readers, direct camera connections, USB memory keys and more.

Those familiar with personal video recorders may be familiar with the term "timeshifting", but Sony Media would like you to get used to another term: "place-shifting". The company has introduced a product called the Slingbox Personal Replicaster. The product features S-Video, composite video and coax cable TV inputs, as well as RCA audio input. The unit then connects to your home network via Ethernet, making your media content available anywhere within the house from connected PCs and notebooks. Even better, you can watch your content remotely too, connecting back to your home entertainment over the Internet. In other words, it's a lot like Sony's LocationFree PC. But since you use the computers or notebooks you already have, it's a more cost-effective solution. The Slingbox will ship mid-2005 and will cost \$250.

Powerline networking has been around for a few years now, but Canon's own Canopus now offers products with speeds up to 200 Mbps over standard household wiring, more than enough to carry a video signal. The higher speed also runs hard to feed gaming and VoIP. The company's new product is the Ai Powerline Ethernet Adapter.

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By Sean Connolly





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HUB @ CES 2005: Living on Video

Video continued to loom large over the proceedings of this year's Consumer Electronics Show, integrated as it was into most of the cool toys — massive televisions, DVD players and burners, and portable multi-media devices all rely on video, after all. High-definition was definitely one of the bigger trends at this year's show: screens are getting bigger, and there's even a high-definition DVD format

war brewing between HD DVD and Blu-ray. Because the two formats won't be released in North America until the end of 2005 (or the beginning of 2006), customers who really want to take advantage of the world of high-definition television will have to stick to the HD television signals coming over the air.

In the meantime, those who want to roll their own high-definition content should take a look at Sony's new HXR-FX1, a consumer-level high-def DV camcorder capable of recording in 1080i resolution. At a cost of US\$3,700, it's still got a prosumer price, but it will allow you to get started now instead of waiting for the pricing to drop sometime next year.

While high definition was flying high, there were still plenty of new products that were a bit more down-to-earth.

Coming this Spring, Sony will also have the DCR-DVR2, a new DVD Handycam that re-creates the camera body to look more like a digital still camera. While it looks a bit odd at first, Sony feels that consumers will find that the USB POC cameras have a more natural grip. Also available in the spring will be the ICR-DVR403, a USB L-1000 portable DVD camera that records in Dolby Digital 5.1 channel surround sound.

Panasonic has also brought a touch of the professional down to the consumer level with the introduction of three new 600-series proHD CCD cameras: the US\$689 PV-6065 has 10x optical zoom and 1.2 megapixel still capture, the \$54689 PV-6015SD bumps that resolution up to 2.3 megapixel, and the US\$999 PV-6025D adds a manual focus ring and bumps the



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Still capture up to 3.1 megapixel. All three are expected on the market in March.

Panasonic also introduced three new compact camcorders with ultra-optical zoom capabilities. The PV-GS10 features a 24x optical zoom, and will cost about \$430. The PV-GS30 will bump that up to 25x optical zoom for about \$500. (From \$534.95 and \$399.95.) For about \$615 (from \$659.95), the PV-GS35 will feature 30x optical zoom, 1080 2-D capability, and image editing software bundled with the camera. All three are due in March.

For those who don't want to decide between digital photography, and digi-tal video, Samsung has introduced the third generation of its DuoCam product, the SC-D85SD. Like the last version of the DuoCam, the DV camcorder has a 10x optical zoom, and the still camera has a 3x optical, but the difference is that this model comes with 5 megapixel still-image capture capability, and a far more compact design. This one even sports a more compact price: the camera, scheduled to hit the market in April, will cost only \$699. That will be followed in July by the SC-D852, a DVD camcorder featuring 10x optical zoom, and 5.33 megapixel still image capture. Even cooler is Samsung's weather-resistant SC-D1004, "Extreme Sports" camera. The lightweight camera records straight to flash memory, there's 32MB built in, and a MemoryStick slot will handle up to 1GB more. The

key feature here is the ability to plug-in an external lens module that can be clamped to your hand or arm, capturing your suicidal plunge down the world's steepest ski lift. Expected in April, the camera will cost \$840. Samsung has its own take on the state-of-the-art compact camera with the introduction of the VPC-C4 model, which offers up to 4 megapixel still image capture, and full-motion MPEG-4 video capture.

The handheld model offers up to 5.1x optical zoom, comes with image stabilization, and uses SecureDigital to save all information. While the card will be extra, a 3GB SD card would hold up to an hour of video. Another wearable video camcorder debuted at the show was Cytop's new Camtop. The Camtop consists of a wearable 200K recording unit, and a pair of glasses. The glasses come with a camera module embedded in the left temple and a video monitor in the right temple. The video you're shooting appears in heads up fashion on the right lens, so you know at all times what you're actually capturing, while still being able to see the world around you. The hand-

dive can also store your DV and MP3 files. The Camtop is due by mid-year, and is expected to cost about \$3,125 (from \$3,800).

By Sean Connolly



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512MB model can hold 128 songs, and the 1GB model twice that amount of encoded with Apple's AAC codec at 128 kbps.

The iPod Shuffle is about the size of most common USB flash drives. It doesn't have an LCD or LCD display, which will make playing designing your new hobby! Having no LCD display makes choosing your tunes on the go more of a crapshoot. There is however a slider on the back of the unit that will shuffle your iTunes play list, giving you random play of what ever songs you have loaded into the unit.

The iPod Shuffle is targeted at people who don't need a ton of songs with them at any given time, such as the gym and jogging crowds who only need to load up enough songs for each gym visit.

Apple is claiming 12 hours of battery life per charge. Personally, I think it would have made more sense to make the unit dependent on consumer

batteries so users could drop and go while on the move. Also most of the iPod Shuffles competition sports an FM tuner, which would have been a very useful feature for this model. However, the unit represents a nice starting point for price and features. Who can't justify the Mini, Click Wheel iPod or the iPod photo.

James Online Music Service

Apple unveiled the Canadian version of the iTunes online music store (www.apple.com/ca/itunes/) with little fanfare on December 2, 2004, claiming to offer an online selection of more than 700,000 songs for download with plenty of Canadian artists.

The best news of all is that the Canadian iTunes store matches the American store's price of 99 cents per song.

By Jason Jurin

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HUB@CES: Gaming

2005 was supposed to be the biggest year for the gaming contingent on the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) floor.

There was even talk of some manufacturers bidding adieu to the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), the video game industry's premiere trade show, as it's too hard to get noticed among the din and flashing lights that are the expo's trademark.

Suffice it to say that if this year is any indication, a systematic abandonment of E3 in favor of CES is unlikely. While it may be hard to get noticed on the E3 show floor, the only way to get noticed as a video game company at CES would likely be to have your game displayed on Samsung's flagship 63-inch plasma screen television. Unlikely.

That said, there were at least a couple of consumer electronics devices putting their best game faces on.

Phantom

Phantom reps showed their wares in the exhibit and—ironically—Microsoft booth, anal pro-show press evenings.

Using Windows XP Embedded, an invisible version of Windows, Infimum Labs is trying to figure out where to position its game machines. In fact, the company seems hesitant to even call it a "game machine" much less a game console. It is referred to instead as the Phantom Gaming Service or Phantom Game Receiver.

The company representative has had its product referred to as "vapourware." As ever, only time will tell. The company for its part has said Phantom will be released in 2005, refusing to get in too specific.

Phantom takes an on-demand approach to gaming and delivers PC games over broadband to the living room. Microsoft apparently doesn't see that as a threat to its Xbox business.

For US\$19.99 per month (\$24.98), subscribers get a local package and essentially rent up to five games at a time. Presumably, new releases aren't included under this basic subscription. Instead it's the games that have been devoted at least one shelf on the perpetual shuffle toward the shelf for every bargain bin.

A spokesperson for Infimum Labs says the company is in talks with major publishers to have games available for download over networks similar to those that had copy appearance in stores. Before that in some cases, as it hopes to open the pipeline at midnight on the day of release. Prices to be determined but are hinted at between US\$19.99 and US\$29.99 (\$24.98 and \$29.98).

Phantom's core idea is to bring the lean-back, sitting on the couch approach to PC games that are more often played in lean-forward, hunched over a desk mode.

In short, it subscribes to the overall CES thought of bringing the gap between the computer area and the living room.

Game controls are unmoored across the PC and Phantom iterations of games; the only core difference is in the delivery and where gamers play them.



The potential problem with bringing PC games into the living room comes in the form of... the form. Namely, in the Phantom's huge oval footprint and now dated "futuristic" (not to mention blindingly white) look. Also, you have to find a place for the smaller than usual but still rather large keyboard and mouse platform.

Phantom at a glance

www.infimumlabs.com 440 Samsung processor
256MB RAM 8GBB HDD nVidia GeForce 7200

Subscription approx. \$24.99/mo

Giromondo

Is it the latest handheld to try to take a run at Nintendo's monopoly of the space on a device more in-tune with what the general public want?

While Giromondo public relations insists the handheld is a gaming device first, its array of internal gadgetry might suggest otherwise.

Running Windows CE net and sporting nVidia mobile graphics processor (see "Giromondo at a glance" this page) the device is blessedly free of the menu slowdown that often plagues handheld devices that try to do too much.

The Giromondo comes in GPS (global positioning system) functionality along with GPS (general packet radio service, a cell phone technology) for text and multimedia messaging as well as online play. Also, users will be able to connect locally via Bluetooth for essentially true location-based gaming. In the flagship game Colors, gamers might defend their turf against rival gangs identified as local using GPS.



In addition, the device manages to crick a VGA resolution (840x480) camera into its back and promises downloadable rich media content, picture viewing, email and digital audio play while lurching at targeted multimedia advertisements (bidding the latest movie blockbusters).

In theory, the device takes the place of a smidgen of consumer electronic devices. In practice, how well any of them perform will become clear once the device is unleashed.

Company reps say the Giromondo will have 12 games available at launch including Colors, Conflict, Vietnam, Richard Burns Rally, The Great Escape and others. Launch dates aren't as easy to come by, however—the company says "early 2005" for the North American roll-out. European prices on the company's Web site list the device at £229 which converts to approximately \$368. North American pricing remains to be seen but the company gives an approximate of US\$499.

By Andrew Amon-Craig

Giromondo at a glance

GeForce 3D 4300 Wireless Media Processor (WMP)
400 MHz Samsung ARM9 processor 2.8-inch TFT LCD colour screen
84MB onboard memory 100 mHz nVidia Chip 63 flash memory
Leisure titles, AngryFish, Chinese City, Colors, Conflict, Dream Team
E, Conflict, Vietnam, International, Flames 2, Richard Burns Rally,
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about as likely as me coming up with a good analogy to explain just how unlikely I am to get one of these. I'm glad that if need be I'll, with 1920x1080 resolution and a screen size just a hair (or more accurately, an inch) below six feet, it can't hurt to dream.

Pyramat FMX Rucker

More than just a rinky-dink on wheels, the FMX Rucker is Pyramat's first attempt at branching out from the vibrantly cool to folding, stereo speaker and subwoofer-brothering gliding bumper/skate gym next to the company made its name creating.

A decision while still skin-clad Rucker was on display (but the company says it will be available in a range of more nicely padded fabric choices). Beneath the seat of this zesty comfy-looking foam seat is made for four-inch motorcycle drivers, two footrests and a spine-reinforcing subwoofer. It's easy on the eyes too without the cumbersome wires that have plagued previous loungers thanks to 2.4 GHz digital wireless audio.

Marc Saltzman's picks

Samsung 422-inch plasma TV

If one product led the show during the loudest it was the largest plasma television in the world. Prominently displayed smack dab in the middle of the Samsung booth was a whopping 422-inch TV. In other words, it was about the size of a broken garage door. While not in production just yet, Samsung claims it is the largest working plasma television. If and when this TV is available in about a year it will cost an estimated US\$180,000.

Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP)

Sony Computer Entertainment America held a media event a day before the show to give some hands-on time with what the company calls the "Ultimate of the 21st Century." After playing a few games on the device, I'm inclined to agree. Out put in Canada by late March the PSP can play 3D games with PlayStation 2 quality

graphics on a 4.3-inch widescreen display, even wirelessly against other users. It can also play music, movies and photos. Battery life is only about half that of the Nintendo DS.

MobileTV

Consider it live television for your cell phone. MobileTV lets you watch 22 stations while out and about. It's considered "pay" techology as you may only watch 30 or 35 minutes here and there while waiting for a bus or plane. So far, more than 20 phones are supported, users are paying a flat rate of \$30 US per month (not including the data router. A cat's up). Video is streamed in real time at a variable 6 to 30 frames per second. Well Mobility, listed they may sign a partnership with the service sometime this year. He's hoping.





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Minding our manners

When our technology moves faster than our etiquette, polite behaviour can be hard to figure out



We've all been there: The middle of a hushed auditorium, the chef's about to start and suddenly a rising, disguised version of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony breaks the silence. Our annoyance grows along with the cell phone's volume, and we silently curse the recordists of whose device is causing the disturbance. And then there's that odd drowsed time when we look down at our purse or pocket and blush to discover that the real culprit is none other than us.

With half of all Canadians using mobile phones, our adoption of wireless devices is moving faster than we can adopt rules to dictate their use in public society. As such, rude wireless behaviour is a daily occurrence. Cellmanners.com, a Web site dedicated to handling questions of technology etiquette, ran a poll that asked readers to name their biggest pet peeves about cell phones. The top two were "fingers in quiet places" and "talking too loudly," followed by "showing off," "talking in restaurants" and "tally conversations."

Beyond these general categories, other anecdotes describing rude behaviour offered on sites like Cellmanners.com and Manners International are familiar to most of us — the intrusive waving degree "cell elbow" (for example, a hand used in close proximity, talking on the phone while talking to a sales clerk, rotating calls at the dinner table, taking calls [or checking a BlackBerry or PDA] during lunch meetings, talking while driving [or walking for that matter]) and especially taking calls in quiet or quiet spaces (like churches or libraries or in formal occasions like weddings or funerals) — all of these image-worthy behaviours are currently regulated only by our individual sense of decorum, which tends to vary widely. Of course the major reason why there are so many incidents of impoliteness is that beyond common courtesy, there are no hard and fast rules. Well, that's not exactly true: The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTa) publishes a set of guidelines governing cell phone etiquette on its Web site (see sidebar), as do associations such as the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, and even cell-phone companies like the America's largest provider (who declared the month of July as "wireless awareness month"). Of course the ultimate guideline is that of classic manners master Emily Post: The 27th edition of *Emily Post's Etiquette: The Definitive Guide to Manners* simplifies the guidelines to "four cell phone never events" that were intended to: leave the rings on in quiet places, ignore those you're with, make repeated calls, or use offensive language. The book also lists several "take care zones" with rules to govern cell phone usage in each (including the street or bus [be quiet and don't shout], the store [never] and the restaurant [make calls in the vestibule, never in the tape]).

The problem with a lot of these rules is that while they are based on common sense, they are often easily ignored unless there is a consequence. In the case of the theatre disruption, it is already common that an offender will be publicly embarrassed by complaints from those in close proximity — avoiding this embarrassment provides an incentive to turn it off.

Cellmanners.com actively attempts to formalize the process by recommending that a "cell glare" — a carefully aimed look of disgust — be generously instigated as a way of denouncing impolite behaviour. "In an age of our incessance, we shouldn't take it on ourselves to police public rules near Emily Post, while disapproving of the cell phone in theatre, advises those offended by the noise to ask the manager to handle the situation rather than confronting the offender directly. Before the passage of time substitutes strange cell phone tales, we may need to rely on official regulations to dictate wireless policies. Slowly these are coming into place. In Japan, for example, the Nagoya Municipal Management Bureau has taken steps to make certain mobile phones inoperative on trains and train platforms. In other cases, rules call on passengers to switch off their mobile phones into the special seats for the aged and disabled. Most familiar to Canadians are the signs in hospitals and other sites for sensitive equipment and the knowledge that there is a serious warning behind these warnings — frequencies can interfere with sensitive medical equipment.

In public places like restaurants, perhaps individual establishments will slowly start to institute policies that govern the use of technology. A *Mail Star* journalist wrote last year reported on the trend for some restaurants, libraries and other businesses to reserve the phone booth — only without the phone — which allows cell users to talk as loud as they want. Indeed, it may be that we need public venues and workplaces to set the example by establishing official rules, at least until enough time has passed for working rules to evolve.

By Sue Branson

Wireless Etiquette

Guidelines by the Canadian Wireless Technology Association (CWTa) www.cwt.ca

Wireless etiquette is simple: It's all about common sense and courtesy.

When others call, turn it off

In public places such as restaurants or churches, remember to turn your mobile device off before you enter to avoid disturbing others by making or receiving calls.

If you must keep your cell phone on paper on, use the mute or vibrating mode to avoid disturbing others when you receive calls. This is especially important in places where personal noise is a no-no, like a movie theatre.

Don't be a clown, turn it down

Use your common sense to decide if you should go outside to a lobby or to another room where you won't disturb others by making or taking calls.

In small or enclosed spaces like a bus or at a meeting, not everyone wants to hear your conversation or perhaps your discussion is confidential. If you must make or take a call, keep it short and be as quiet as possible.

Not everyone cares, so tend to share

Some places — including hospitals and airplanes — have strict rules about wireless device use. Always respect these rules — for your safety and for the safety of others.

HUB @ CES 2005: Digital Photography

With more than 4,500 exhibitors spread out over a million and a-half square feet of show floor space, it can be a daunting task to try and see everything at the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

But a funny thing happens when you get a bunch of geeky journalists together who love electronics — they start talking about a few "must see" gadgets. After all, we know these kinds of high-tech gizmos all year 'round so we should know what's hot and what's not. Not surprisingly, many of these products go on to win "Best of Show" in their respective categories.

Digital photography is no exception. Hundreds of new products debuted at CES 2005, so here's a look at some of the coolest products.

First WiFi camera

Now this is a clever idea: Images snapping pictures at your daughter's birthday party and by the time you walk over to your computer to print off a few for your guests, the snapshots are already on the screen. Say what?

That's the premise behind the first WiFi (802.11b) enabled camera: The Kodak EasyShare One lets users send their cameras' photos over the airwaves to a nearby PC, or email them to someone directly from the camera via Kodak's internet photo service — providing the user has a wireless network. This eliminates the often time-consuming process of connecting the camera to the computer (or popping a memory card into a printer or a PC), then transferring all the images over to a specific folder before archiving or emailing.

The 4-megapixel camera, which features a large three-inch adjustable LCD screen at the back, can hold up to 3,500 images with its 256MB of internal memory.

There's a small catch, however — users need to purchase the WiFi card separately for about US\$100. The EasyShare One itself will cost about US\$399 when it's available in June. No Canadian price or availability has been announced as of yet.

Kodak Canada has confirmed, however, the first WiFi-enabled Printer Dock will be available this June for about \$120. The EasyShare Printer Dock Plus is a portable half-photo printing solution that can take an optional WiFi card (802.11b). There too, once a Kodak camera is docked (or another manufacturer's camera is connected via PoEth edge), pictures can be wirelessly sent to a PC within 30 metres or so over a wireless home net work. Also, the Printer Dock Plus can act as a wireless printer for other WiFi-enabled devices such as desktop and laptop computers.



Instant Replay

Half the fun of participating in extreme sports — such as cycling, snowboarding, motorbike racing or skateboarding — is reliving those wild moments with friends after the fact.

Now you don't just have to rely on your memories — the Samsung SC-X305 Sports Cam made a splash at the show not just because of its extremely compact construction and water-resistant body but because it also includes a hands-free camera lens module that can be attached to an armband or headband to capture digital video from your perspective. Cool. The video cam itself is equally impressive with its 30x optical zoom and a 580K CCD lens. Digital rolls can be captured at either 720x480 or 1,280x960 resolutions. Other features include a two-inch LCD screen, 0.5-second power-on feature, an image stabilizer and 512MB of built-in memory to save the footage. Samsung says the product should be available in the Great White North in April 2005 for about \$249.

Jack of all trades

While not a brand new product, the SE-AS20 digital multimedia camera was proudly showcased at the mammoth Panasonic booth (one of the largest at the Las Vegas Convention Center). The product was one of the 2005 Best of Innovations Awards in the annual competition hosted by the Consumer Electronics Association.

This tiny camera (measuring just 28mm x 50mm x 37mm) and weighing only 99 grams (without rechargeable battery) can perform a wide array of functions such as shoot MPEG-4 movies at 320x240 pixels, still images at 640x480 pixels and play MP3 or AAC music stored on Secure Digital (SD) memory cards. The device also has a built-in voice recorder. The SE-AS20 (a little more at Panasonic.ca for \$299.99), which has a 3-inch swivel LCD screen, won the 2005 award for significant energy savings as the product uses low-power circuit technology which yields reduced power consumption.



By Marc Selman

Digital Photography Tutorial 13

Learning to see as the camera "sees"

Part 1: Perspective control

One of the biggest challenges in photography is learning to see as the camera "sees." This may sound odd, because we tend to assume that what we see is the real world as looked to a fixed physical reality. But the fact is, our eyes and brains process information within a context of things we know.

For example, we know that buildings are rectangular. Suppose you want to take a picture of some architectural gem. To get the entire structure in, you tilt the camera up and snap away. Later when you inspect your images, you are disappointed. They haven't captured what you thought you saw.

When we look up at a building, the image formed in our eyes might be distorted in some way. But rather than concluding that the building is a malleable structure that's in constant flux, we know that it is rigid and maintains a constant form, so we ignore part of the information being received by our eyes. What the brain knows overrides what the eye records.

Cameras, in the other hand, can only follow the laws of optics. The geometry of a surface will be recorded accurately, so if you tilt the camera at an odd angle the parallel lines and right angles will be distorted. When you snap the shutter, these distortions are captured in full fidelity. For example, the sides of a building will converge as the front face will be distorted like a trapezoid. Unless the sensor is exactly parallel to a building's front wall that surface be recorded without rectilinear distortion.

Large format cameras have tilt and shift mechanisms

that allow you to tilt the lens up to take in more of a tall building, but still keep the film parallel to the plane of the building front. Some 35mm camera makers have developed perspective control lenses that achieve a similar end.

In the digital age, we have our own way of correcting perspective: as most image editors have tools to allow you to make converging lines parallel or transform trapezoidal shapes back to the right angled shapes they are in the real world. In Photoshop CS there is a check box for perspective in the crop tool menu bar. If you activate it, you can move the sides and corners of the bounding box independently so you can match the lines to an area known to be rectilinear. When you crop the image, it is redrawn to match that geometry. Jasc Paint Shop Pro 8 has a specific perspective correction tool on the tool bar that works similarly. In Photoshop Elements 3 or earlier versions of Photoshop, perspective control is accessed using the image transform function. (You'll then need to adjust the height of the bounding box to re-establish a proper perspective.)

This tool is very handy for correcting unintended perspective distortions, but often distortion works in your favour and trying to correct it will only reduce the visual impact of your photo. For example, I have some shots of the office buildings in downtown Toronto taken with an ultra-wide lens. The buildings recede dramatically to an imaginary vanishing point, accentuating the tallness of the structures.

By David Tanaka



Salvation for badly taken pictures

Bad Pics Fixed QUICK: How to Fix Lousy Digital Pictures Using Adobe Photoshop Elements 3

By Michael Miller

Published by No Starch Press
7037-7083-2 ISBN 0-7807-7083-2
Paperback, 288 pages Price: \$25.99

Many image guides tell you how to take good pictures, but what if you've taken a bad one that you want to salvage the shot? This is where *Bad Pics Fixed Quick* starts. It goes through a number of common picture-taking errors and tells you how to correct them in Photoshop Elements 3 to correct them.

The book provides fixes for many common picture and composition problems – making dark photos lighter, and cropping to make the subject more prominent, for example. It also introduces you to some of the more vocalized subjects in Elements 3, such as masks and layers. It also moves into the somewhat complex area of resampling – where the book aims to point to bad photos but rather to understanding elements within a good photo. The topics vary to where best to place smooth skin and eliminate blemishes.



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The sixth episode in Nintendo's all-ages Mario Party franchise—a series of Nintendo-themed board games in videogame format—provides players with entertainment similar to those seen in the last four sequels, namely new mini-games, game



boards, and play modes. In other words, there is little in the way of innovation. Players familiar with other games in the series will require no instruction to play Mario Party 6. The game's primary mode, Party, runs up to four play-

ers travel across a virtual game board trying to collect the most stars. Each board has its own unique characteristics. The following Turntop board features swings, up lines, slides, and a special space where play-ers can pay off fees to steal coins and stars from other players. Fair's Square incorporates luck by way of a slot-machine space and variable star prices. For the first time, all of the boards are subject to shifts of day

Mario Party 6

Publisher: Nintendo Developer: Hudson Soft Platform: GameCube

and night that can change a variety of game elements from star locations to board paths.

At the end of each turn (and sometimes in the middle of turns) players engage in one of about 50 different mini-games. The mini-games in this edition are new, but most feel like rehashes of challenges we've seen in previous Mario Party games. Some require players to cooperate, others are every man for himself. Some are strictly games of chance, while others require certain skills, providing an advantage to players who have better memories, experience with platform games, familiarity with the controller or quick reflexes.

Realizing that players were basically getting the same game for the sixth time in a row, Hudson tried to mix things up a bit this time by including a microphone and a few new mini-games. However, the only mic mode worth playing is a quiz show game in which players take turns in mini-games that require simple answers spoken into the microphone. Unfortunately, the voice-recognition software seems a bit glitchy, making the microphone games sometimes feel as though they are more trouble than they're worth.

By Chad Seppala

INFO BOX

- 1 **Party of the year**—and possibly Game of the Year
- 2 **Unsurpassed innovation**—the wonderful board game that is Turntop
- 3 **Real trouble**—And more of the same, which, I suppose, should be expected in a Mario Party game

Resident Evil 4

Publisher: Capcom Developer: Capcom Platform: GameCube



Forget all the things that may have annoyed you about past Resident Evil games. With RE4, Capcom has abandoned the awkward remote control movement, restrictive inventory, scarce ammo, and limited saving.

The story centers around Leon Kennedy, who arrives in a rustic European village with the task of saving the President's kidnapped daughter, Ashley. The situation quickly deteriorates as the villagers start attacking him with single-minded, psychotic hostility. These villagers are not the slow-shuffling zombies of past games, however. They're intelligent. They can run and dodge, throw projectiles, climb ladders and cooperate with each other.

For example, early in the game, Leon was in danger of being overwhelmed by a phalanx of axe-wielding men in the village square. I decided the least strategic would be to climb up into a tower and pick them off one by one through the windows. The villagers simply started lobbing lit torches through the windows to flush me out. The pacing is brilliant. Full-out adrenaline-pumping shoot-outs are balanced by moments of serene calm when you're hanging on every shuffle and thump. RE4 has evolved the good "zombie jumping out of a closet" trope into something that's subtle and genuinely unsettling, achieving a balance that is near perfect. Puzzles are challenging but not too obtuse. Boss battles are fierce but not unfair, and the challenge is intense but not insurmountable.

By Eric Sell

INFO BOX

- 1 **Backed from many past games**—the "let's try to make it" games do well, but not enough to get better
- 2 **A lot of "let's try to make it" games**—the "let's try to make it" games do well, but not enough to get better
- 3 **Real trouble**—Capcom has tried to make out of all kinds of horror-related and created a masterpiece



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